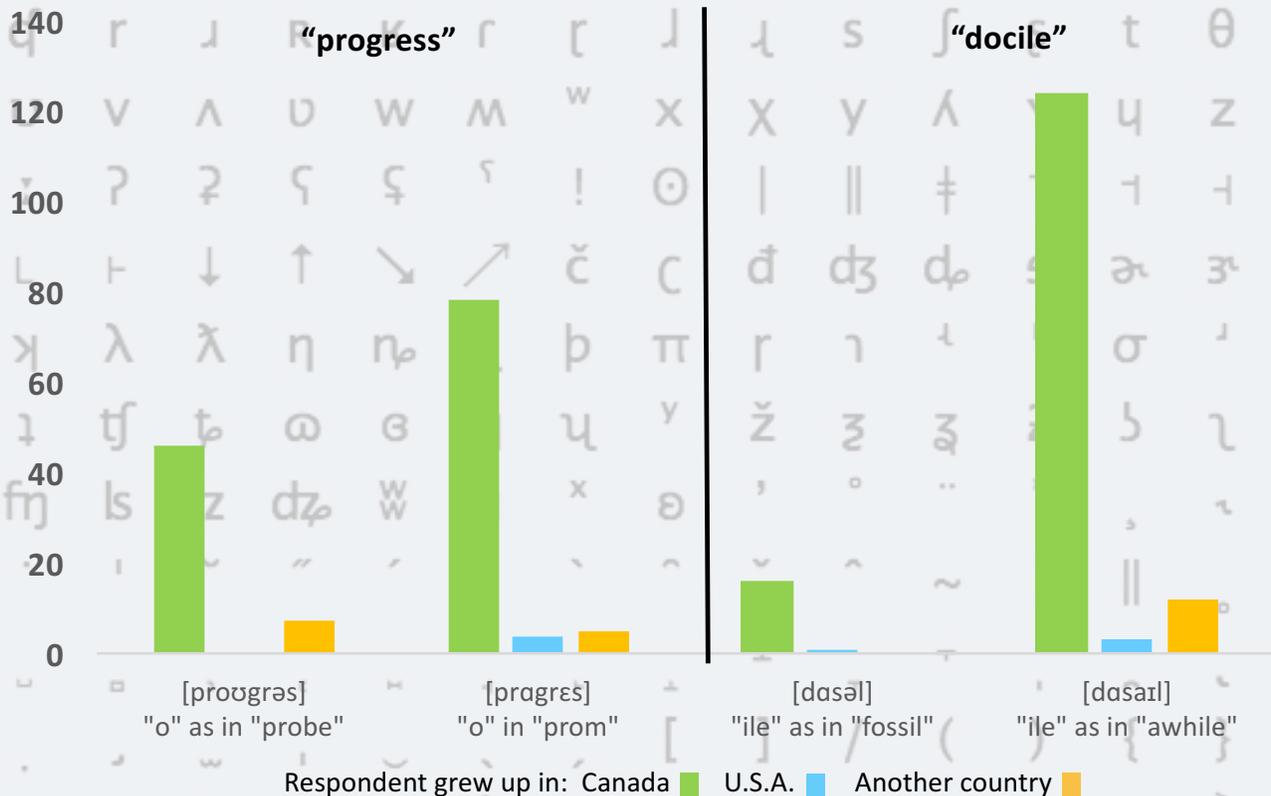


Survey Results

How do you pronounce “progress” and “docile”?



In our previous results poster, we examined variation in spelling. We found that for our Canadian respondents, spelling was in line with British standards for some words and American standards for others. We considered that one characteristic of Canadian spelling may be the acceptance of two forms!

In this survey, we consider variation in pronunciation. Words with the *pro-* prefix, such *progress*, may be pronounced with the vowel /ɒʊ/ (as in “probe”), typical in Britain, or with /ɑ/ (as in “prom”), typical in the United States. The Canadian pronunciation is said to be /ɒʊ/, and although this is the case for most respondents in our survey, we are surprised to see such a high number of /ɑ/ responses. In the case of *docile* and other words ending in *-ile*, Canadians in our survey overwhelmingly prefer the /aɪ/ vowel in the second syllable, as in “awhile”, the variant common to Britain, as opposed to the typical American pronunciation /ə/, as in “fossil”.

Some respondents note that in the case of “progress”, part of speech might affect their pronunciation. For many speakers, when the word is a noun, there is stress on the first syllable – PROgress – but when the word is a verb, there is stress on the second syllable – proGRESS. When a vowel is in an unstressed syllable, it is usually “reduced”, which means it is shorter and quieter and more centralized in quality. This further contributes to the pronunciation differences!

Thank you to all who participated! 😊

Results from posters in two locations: Outside Strathy Language Unit office (Macintosh-Corry F406) and the 3rd floor of Kingston Hall.